

## Pair the Spares

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Summary: When Miriel comes to the realisation that Robin is making a habit of stationing her with Gregor, the quiet mercenary offers an unexpected explanation.

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"Robin has become rather fond of stationing us together recently," Miriel mused as she scanned the distant landscape for signs of stragglers. Their instructions were simple: stay together and only advance if presented with the opportunity to disperse a lone Risen or save a fellow Shepherd. "Her motivations are beginning to stir my curiosity. I wonder at her purpose."

Gregor looked up from sharpening the iron sword that, to his utmost frustration, was still the best weapon he could yield. He, she was noting, was taking their assigned position harder than she was. To him, the reminder that they were, objectively speaking, weaker than the other Shepherds was a personal slight. To her, it was nothing more than a fact.

Assuming that the mercenary would offer nothing more than a prosaic assertion that the only way to discover the truth would be to approach Robin directly, Miriel turned her attention back to her post. War tended to bring out a different side to people's personalities, and, since their location gave her a good view of the battlefield as a whole, so she was eager to make use of the chance to study that firsthand.

To her surprise, however, Gregor's response was anything but banal. "Why wonder when Gregor knows?" he asked. "Robin wants many marriages. Miriel and Gregor are only ones unwed. Link is clear."

Miriel's eyebrows shot up as she turned back to face him again. "That is a most interesting hypothesis. I have heard of married individuals

endeavouring to find partners for their single friends, but I never considered the prospect that our own tactician might be doing just that. Her duty demands that her focus remain on tactics, after all. Yet..."

Pulling her notebook out of her pocket, the mage hurriedly detailed her initial reactions, not wanting to overlook even a single part of the incident.

"Miriel is displeased?"

"Not in the slightest. Indeed, it presents a wonderful opportunity to experience such a peculiar phenomenon firsthand. How far will Robin go in this attempt to manipulate our minds into assuming that constant proximity is synonymous with romantic compatibility, I wonder? Naturally, I will need to scrutinise your reactions quite closely, since there is a direct correlation between sample size and generalisability. It is a pity I did not notice this trend earlierâ€¦ Is it a recent development?"

Her companion shook his head. "Not recent. Since troop stop advancing, start training. Since Gaius and Olivia marry."

Miriel's gut twisted in disappointment. So much raw data was lost forever due to her inattentiveness. "I suppose it is necessary to conclude that I might not be as observant as I originally presumed."

"Fighting is busy life. No one notices all at once, not even soaring eagles."

"There is some veracity to that," Miriel acknowledged. She adjusted her glasses before peering thoughtfully at the earnest mercenary. "Gregor, would you consent to embark upon this research project with me? There is much to be done, and it is disproportionate to the abilities of one sole person, even one as practiced as I. Some assistance would not go amiss."

The man paused to consider. Once, Miriel would have assumed he was struggling to comprehend the substance of her question, but she was beginning to suspect he was much more astute than she knew. Eventually, he smirked across at her. "As long as Gregor and Miriel not marry. Is nice woman, but Gregor and Miriel not compatible."

"I wholeheartedly concur." Satisfied that they understood one another, she immediately directed her attention to the task of formulating possible research methodologies.

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><p>AN: The support system is fun, but it would be \_really \_intrusive from the characters' point of view.

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